

SUBJECT: FUNDING FOR IMPROVING EXISTING HWY 53
SOURCE: LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Whereas, Highway 53 is a primary transportation route for the Chippewa Valley area, and is a designated route of the Corridors 2020 program; and,

Whereas, due to the present local conflict and confusion surrounding the project, it may be subject to undue delays that will end up being detrimental to local traffic safety. Highway 53 at the present time already exceeds the accident rate for state-wide urban freeways by some 340 percent, on a highway that now exceeds its operating capacity. Any further delay in the selection of a Highway 53 bypass route can only cause additional strain on the present Hastings Way, Highway 53 route; and,

Whereas, the Greater Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce has endorsed the Inner Corridor and the need for funding this project in order to enhance the movement of traffic, and lessen the accident rate on the currently congested existing route; and,

Whereas, transportation is critical to economic development; and,

Whereas, Highway 53 has been studied extensively by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, which has recommended the reconstruction of Highway 53 along a new "Inner Corridor" route. It has long been the position of the Greater Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce that the Inner Corridor should be the route selected by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Greater Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce encourages the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to release funding to begin upgrading the existing route of Highway 53 as soon as possible.

DATE

Jan 19, 1994

SIGNED

[Signature] Chairman



RESOLUTION

**IN SUPPORT OF THE
CONSTRUCTION OF HWY. 53 FREEWAY
AS RECOMMENDED BY THE
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

WHEREAS, Highway 53 is a primary transportation route for the Chippewa Valley area, and is a designated route of the Corridors 2020 Program; and,

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation has designated the inner corridor as the route for the Hwy. 53 Freeway; and,

WHEREAS, Highway 53 at the present time already exceeds the accident rate for state-wide urban freeways by some 340 percent and on a highway that now exceeds its operating capacity. Any further delay in the construction of a Highway 53 Freeway route can only cause additional strain on the present Hastings Way, Highway 53 route; and,

WHEREAS, the Eau Claire Area Industrial Development Corporation has endorsed the Inner Corridor and the need for funding this project in order to enhance the movement of traffic and lessen the accident rate on the currently congested existing route; and,

WHEREAS, this transportation link is critical to economic development in the Chippewa Valley.

THEREFORE, be it resolved, that the Eau Claire Area Industrial Development Corporation supports the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's recommendation to begin the construction of the Highway 53 Freeway as soon as possible.

DATE: February 17, 1994.

The Eau Claire Area Industrial Development Corporation

By: _____

James F. Vaudreuil, President





1303 LYNN AVENUE
P.O. BOX 8
ALTOONA, WI 54720-0008

715-839-6092
FAX 715-839-1610

February 24, 1994

Mayor Bard Kittleson
City of Barron
Barron, Wisconsin

RE: Hwy 53 Bypass

Bard,

It has been brought to my attention that you have been informed that the location of the highway 53 bypass has been settled and is no longer an issue.

As the Mayor of the City of Altoona, I am informing you that this issue is far from settled.

We have the continued support of 19 other local city, county, and town governments and boards for the outer bypass. Our resolutions for the outer bypass recognize that "it is the only option that will effectively move traffic north and south, connecting to the present highway 53 system.

Our City will continue to oppose any option that will not work. The inner bypass option IS NOT AN OPTION that will work. This has been shown time and time again.

We need to put our taxpayers highway dollars to their best use. The inner bypass option is not using our dollars wisely; and we will not let a few dictate what the majority know is right.

Sincerely yours,


Larry Sturz
Mayor

The USH 53 Outer Bypass and Hastings Way Improvement Action Committee

March 1, 1994

*(Sent to Washburn, Chippewa and
Eau Claire county municipalities)*

Your government has been targeted by interests from the city of Eau Claire for support for the USH 53 Inner Bypass/"freeway" in Chippewa and Eau Claire counties. DOT District 6 Director Tom McCarthy recently announced that World War III on this issue would soon be underway!

Their plan of attack was to have a few Eau Claire business people prevail upon the DOT to select the Inner Bypass/"freeway" for construction and to take the position that It's the Inner Bypass/"freeway" or nothing. After this was accomplished, the Eau Claire City Council passed a resolution to support any "freeway" that the DOT would designate.

Mark Lewis, President of the Eau Claire City Council, was to then prevail upon area communities to pass the Eau Claire generic resolution. He was to promise that if they did so, he would guarantee that the project would be enumerated for funding by the Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) this year. Has the TPC given him the authority to make this guarantee?

Co-Chairmen:

Carlyn L. Malom 682 Meadow View Dr., Chippewa Falls WI 54729 • 723-6638

Robert D. Sather 2120 Moonlight Bay Dr., Altoona WI 54720 • 835-5020 (home) 836-3373 (work)

The entire scheme is based upon the argument that the location of the bypass is no longer the issue. THIS IS FALSE!!! (See attached letter from the Mayor of Altoona to the Mayor of Barron.) The Town of Hallie is also totally opposed to the Inner Bypass/"freeway". The DOT did not coordinate the site of the Inner Bypass/"freeway" with the long-range plans of the Altoona and Hallie governments, nor did the DOT secure their agreement for the location.

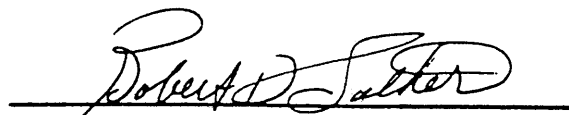
An Inner Bypass/"freeway" would DEVASTATE the environmental, economic, and social welfare of both communities and would have negative impacts on their education and safety. It would also encourage additional urban sprawl in farming areas because utilities and major residential developments would be located to the east of the "freeway". Extensive areas of urban green space which are zoned Nature Conservancy would also be destroyed.


Since 4 of the 7.5 miles of the Inner Bypass/"freeway" are located in Hallie and Altoona, THE LOCATION OF THE BYPASS IS THE CRUCIAL QUESTION!!! Ignoring this question will cause endless challenges to, and delays of, the project.

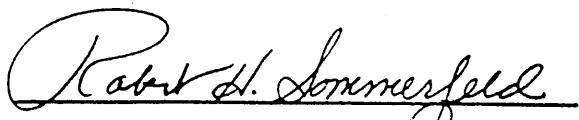
The position of our Committee is in stark contrast to that of the DOT. We do not scream, "It's the Outer Bypass or nothing." We advocate:

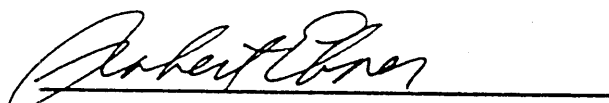
1. Significant improvements for Hastings Way so that existing traffic patterns to and from Eau Claire will become safer and more efficient
2. A rural bypass (consistent with existing USH 53 bypasses of other communities) that will be less expensive, shorter, and more cost effective for truckers, industries, tourism, agriculture, and the general public. Who wants another "Eau Claire bottleneck"? That is what the Inner Bypass/"freeway" would be.

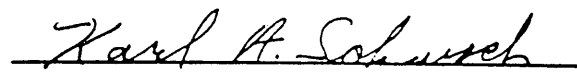
We are also receptive to discussing the various compromise solutions which have been proposed by area legislators and others. We believe that the quickest, most economical, and best long-range solution for this project can be realized by rejecting the DOT and City of Eau Claire mandate that It's the Inner Bypass/"freeway" or nothing.

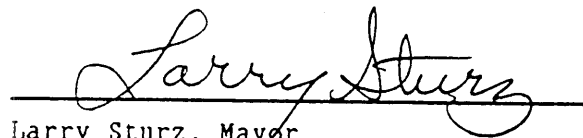

Robert Sather, Supervisor
Eau Claire County Board, Dist. 11
2120 Moonlight Bay Drive
ALTOONA WI 54720

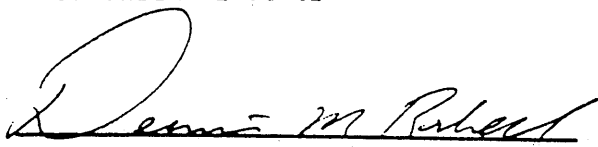

Carlyn Malom, Supervisor
Chippewa County Board, Dist. 19
682 Meadow View Dr.
CHIPPEWA FALLS WI 54729

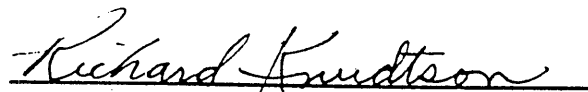

Robert Sommerfeld, Supervisor
Chippewa County Board, Dist. 23
927 W. Spruce St.
CHIPPEWA FALLS WI 54729


Robert Ebner, Supervisor
Barron County Board, Dist. 19
P. O. Box 307
CAMERON WI 54822


Karl Schwoch, Trustee
Fall Creek Village Board
P. O. Box 246
FALL CREEK WI 54742


Larry Sturz, Mayor
City of Altoona
1412 Garfield Ave.
ALTOONA WI 54720


Dennis Roshell, Alderman
City of Chippewa Falls
739 A Street
CHIPPEWA FALLS WI 54729

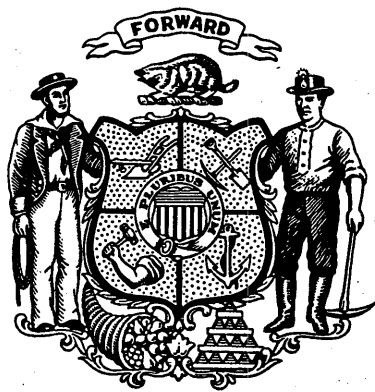

Richard Knudtson, Clerk
Fall Creek Board of Education
P.O. Box 512
FALL CREEK WI 54742

Attachment and Enclosures

c Gov. Tommy Thompson

✓ Selected Wisconsin Legislators

END



END

Our Readers Sound Off...

Legislator, DOT Not Listening

Mary Hubler, our representative, did a great disservice to her constituents by escorting her friend the Eau Claire City Council president around Barron and Washburn counties recently, touting an "Eau Claire Freeway." That is the latest name for a poor choice for through traffic on Hwy. 53 and a worse choice for local traffic in that area. It is also an awful waste of our tax dollars!

Hubler could have done a greater service by talking to the legislators from the Eau Claire area who, by a majority of 7-to-1 support what the majority of their constituents want, a true bypass around the City of Eau Claire to I-94. In addition, the following public boards all support an outer bypass: The county boards of Barron and Sawyer; the cities of Altoona, Barron, Chetek, Chippewa Falls, and Rice Lake; the villages of Fairchild and Fall Creek; the Altoona and Fall Creek school districts; the townships of Cedar Lake and Chetek in Barron County, Hallie in Chippewa County, Wascott in Douglas County, Fairchild, Lincoln, Ludington and Otter Creek in Eau Claire County.

The county boards in Chippewa and Eau Claire counties have both rejected resolutions supporting the inner bypass. The only municipal support for an inner route is the City of Eau Claire and the townships of Seymour and Washington in Eau Claire County.

A bit of discussion with the taxpayers in her own district would have also helped. A survey of major businesses and resorts in a corridor parallel to and 20 miles on each side of Hwy. 53 from Chippewa Falls to Superior found a 68-5 majority in favor of an outer bypass.

It showed that 18% of the trucks serving these businesses had stops scheduled in Eau Claire. The Department of Transportation in its report said that 62% of the trucks serving this corridor had stops scheduled in Eau Claire so would not use an outer bypass. What a false statement!

The resorts reported that 70% of their visitors use the 53 corridor to get to their cabins and campgrounds. It should be quite obvious that the large majority of them come by Eau Claire and prefer the safest, fastest route.

A permanent, continuous, traffic counter in Hwy. 53 just south of the Hwy. 8 interchange below Cameron has shown a daily average increase in traffic of 24.6% in the last 2 years. This, to a large extent, is through traffic generated because of the great improvement in all of the rest of Hwy. 53. The traffic ranges from an average of 5,000 vehicles per day in January to

over 10,100 in July. The DOT said that they cannot justify an outer route because it would only carry 7,000 vehicles per day in the year 2010. Do you really believe that?

The outer route favors through traffic. It takes traffic on a shorter, all-rural freeway, with most likely a 65 mph speed, directly to I-94. It will be the shortest route, the cheapest to maintain and costs \$11 million dollars less to build than an inner route.

The inner route helps through traffic to a lesser degree since it terminates in a congested area on old Hwys. 53 and 93, where it competes with heavy local traffic from the mall areas. It uses old, existing highway from there to I-94. It is 1 1/2 miles farther, costs 11 million more to build, will be more costly to maintain, have a maximum speed of 55 mph and have poorly placed interchanges.

An outer route would be slightly longer for local traffic traveling from the very north end to the present junction of Hwys. 53 and 12 on the southeast edge of Eau Claire. However, with proper design (the DOT never did attempt to make a workable design for this route) the outer route would probably take less time to travel and be safer because of better interchange design and location.

The DOT's major point of support for the inner route is the premise that it will take 14,000 more cars per day off Hastings Way, old 53 in Eau Claire, than the outer route would by 2010. This is not true.

Any traffic not traveling the full distance of the freeway will face increased mileage of from 8-260% using the proposed inner route over staying on present Hastings Way to any in-between points such as North Crossing, Birch Street, Main Street, Highland Avenue, Brackett Avenue, etc. Common sense tells us that the DOT position is not valid.

A final note, Mary, is that the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram, an avid inner bypass proponent, had a ballot in its Dec. 5, 1993 issue where people could vote for their preference of a bypass route. Remember that the high percentage of subscribers to this paper are residents of the Chippewa Valley. Also, your friend Mr. Lewis made a concerted effort to get out a vote favoring the inner route. In spite of this, of the over 1,800 ballots returned, only 42.5% favored an inner route.

About 25 years ago, the political clout of Eau

See SOUND OFF, Page 5

Sound Off...

Continued from Page 4

Claire businesses successfully got a city route for Hwy. 53 instead of the originally planned outer bypass of the city.

Please, Mary, will you, along with the editorial department of The Chronotype, listen to the people and support a true bypass of Eau Claire? It is the cheapest, and the only one that makes common sense. We have suffered this long with a costly, slow, dangerous bottleneck in Eau Claire. Let's not repeat the mistake! A 2-year delay in construction is a small price to pay if it means that, in the end, we will have the proper route for perhaps the next 50 years.

Robert Ebner, Barron
County Supervisor
Arnold Ellison, County Board
Chairman
Bard Kittleson, Mayor of
Barron
Shirley Webb, Mayor of
Chetek

Rice Lake Chronotype

Chetek Alert

Barron News-Shield

Week of March 14, 1994

Group intends to rally inner bypass supporters

By Thomas B. Pfankuch
Leader-Telegram staff 3-94 .

A political action group that favors construction of the U.S. 53 inner bypass has formed to counter efforts of inner bypass opponents and to rally people behind the inner corridor.

The new citizens group has about a dozen core members but expects to grow quickly as more people realize there is a group that supports the inner corridor west of Lake Altoona, said Penny Graham, a member of the new group.

"We hope to get people involved who support the project so they can become vocal about it," Graham said. "Either we build this or we get nothing for the next 25 years."

The new group formed a few weeks ago, just a few months from the scheduled start of the hearing process before the Transportation

Projects Commission, which meets every two years and recommends to the state Legislature which highway projects should be funded.

A group that favors construction of the outer bypass east of Lake Altoona has been in existence since November 1992. That group, called the U.S. 53 Outer Bypass and Hastings Way Improvement Action Committee, has been actively supporting the outer corridor in many places and meetings where the project has been discussed.

Graham said the new inner bypass group also will lobby governments that want information on the bypass issue.

Graham acknowledged her group has come into the bypass debate at a late date, but she said the group has unique plans to rally supporters of the inner corridor.

"It's never too late," she said.

"The (TPC) will decide in July which projects to fund, and they have to know that people here do support the route that the DOT has selected."

Graham wouldn't divulge what sort of "unique twists" the group has planned to gain support for the inner route, but she said she expects the group to be very active.

"There are a lot of people out there who support the inner and we just need to rally them," she said.

BUILD "53" NOW

NEWS RELEASE

For more information contact:
Bob Halloin, Chairman
834-3411

April 8, 1994
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A "Build 53 Now" area committee has been organized to support approval in 1994 for the new U.S. 53 inner bypass recommended by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

The group will conduct a public information program to encourage support from citizens and government officials, according to Bob Halloin of Eau Claire, committee chairman.

"We are emphasizing the need to move forward now," Halloin said. "The inner bypass will be the only U.S. 53 route considered by the state Transportation Projects Commission this summer when it reviews proposed highway projects."

The Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) meets every two years and recommends to the state Legislature which highway projects should be funded.

"Even with a favorable commission recommendation and legislative funding, Highway 53 construction won't begin until the year 2002," Halloin said. "We can't afford to let this opportunity pass us by."

(More)

Build 53 Now steering committee members, in addition to Halloin, are Mike O'Meara, Joel Higgins, Bill Bittner and Pat Culbert of Eau Claire, John Dotseth of Menomonie, and Mike Kell, a representative for the Chippewa Falls area.

"We'll be sharing information about the importance of the new highway through advertisements, speaking appearances and cooperation with other organizations interested in the project," Halloin said.

A primary public concern about existing Highway 53 is traffic congestion. An average of one accident per day occurs along the section to be replaced by the proposed bypass, according to the state Department of Transportation.

In addition to having concerns about issues related to public safety and property damage, the Build 53 Now committee sees the highway improvement as important to area economic development.

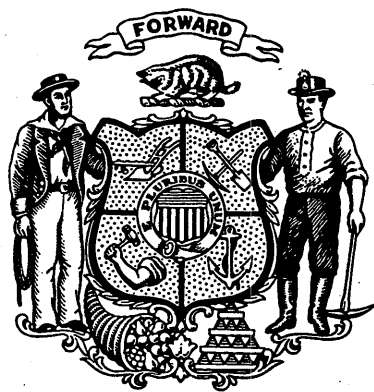
"The inner bypass will effectively serve through-traffic, regional traffic and local traffic," Halloin said. "It's the best overall solution to a serious transportation problem."

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END



END

Chair:

Human Resources, Labor,
Tourism, Veterans &
Military Affairs
Special Joint Committee
on Fort McCoy

DAVE ZIEN

STATE SENATOR

23rd Senate District

Member:
Transportation, Agriculture,
Local & Rural Affairs
Business, Economic
Development & Urban Affairs
Transportation Projects
Commission
Council on Tourism

April 11, 1994

Secretary Charles Thompson
DOT
Room 120B
4802 Sheboygan Avenue
Madison, WI 53705

Post-It™ brand fax transmittal memo 7671		# of pages > 1
To	From	
Cc	Co.	
Dept.	Phone #	
Fax	Fax #	

Dear Secretary Thompson:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the Highway 53 issue with me.

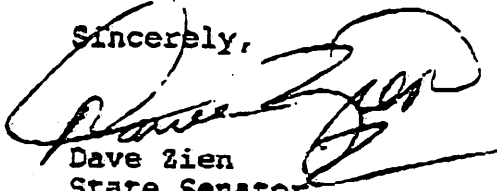
Per our conversation this morning, please research these items:

1. Giving the Outer Corridor an opportunity to be voted on at the upcoming projects meetings this summer.
2. Initiating the EIS process immediately so that as much can be completed as possible by this summer.
3. Supplementing the Outer Corridor to complete a Melby Road overpass, a Co. Trk. 00 overpass (Farm & Fleet) and a Road from East end of Altoona to the Oakwood Mall area.
4. Improving the existing Highway 53 with \$24 million if the TPC approves neither route.

It is important that we pursue this research with the intent that both sides become winners. We insist that the Outer be given its chance so that a corridor is built.

I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday at 1:00 p.m..

Sincerely,


Dave Zien
State Senator
23rd Senate District

DAZ:hmr

Chair:

Human Resources, Labor,
Tourism, Veterans &
Military Affairs
Special Joint Committee
on Fort McCoy

DAVE ZIEN

STATE SENATOR

23rd Senate District

Member:

Transportation, Agriculture,
Local & Rural Affairs
Business, Economic
Development & Urban Affairs
Transportation Projects
Commission
Council on Tourism

April 15, 1994

Tom McCarty
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
State Office Building
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Dear Tom:

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation as a whole does a great job. On a daily basis, members of my staff and myself work extremely well with DOT. Employees are dedicated, professional and proficient.

Explanations needed:

I. Who chose the Inner Bypass, when and why?

- A. Please prove to me that the inner was not chosen decades ago. Was the over \$1.5 million spent so far to "prove the inner was best and to discredit the outer in every way possible?" (Rather than choose the best bypass)
- B. At the DOT/legislators meeting I called together on Wednesday, 4/13/94, I asked when the DOT started to support the inner. Fred Ross responded-1992.

But, Jon Erickson, while on the Altoona City Council, before he became Mayor remembers; Fred Ross using overlays to show that the inner was where the Highway 53 Bypass was going.

Just who was involved and to what extent in this movement during the time that Owen Ayres was DOT Secretary under Lee Sherman Dreyfus? Perhaps this sensitivity and ownership caused a highly regarded community leader (and a Republican) to loudly tell me at the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on 4/12/94, at Fanny Hill that, "If you don't support the inner, you are dead meat!"

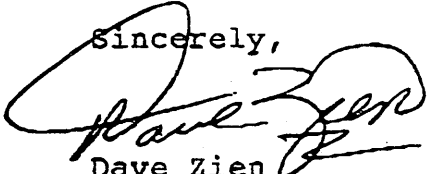
Bureaucrats can be very creative and most effective in twisting arms and using statistics to prove a predetermined position or view.

- C. Summer 1992, Tom McCarthy said, "This (Hwy 53) is only small potatoes compared to what I went thru in Milwaukee." Also mentioned and inferred was, "We can get the DNR, federal and state agencies to do what ~~they~~ we want." (to make the inner the only choice)
- II. Proposed traffic counts have always been disputed. During planning, construction and even at the dedication ceremonies of the North Crossing, DOT estimated the traffic flow on Hwy 53 would be a wash.
- A. On Wednesday, we were told that there is indeed an increase of traffic North of the North Crossing. Please give me traffic counts.
- III. Why is the EIS completion taking so long? I thought it was to be done last summer.
- IV. In June 1993, as TPC member, I asked for:
1. Information about TPC policies and procedures.
 2. A formal \$24 million proposal be drawn up for the summer 1994 TPC meetings in case a bypass was not selected.
 3. The outer be an alternative to be voted on.
- Only on 4/12/94, did I start to get answers to my questions, verbal, not yet in writing.
- V. Why did my April 23, 1992 and December 2, 1992 letters go unanswered? Please respond-many points deserve attention.
- VI. David W. Carlson told me in January 1994 that he'd get answers to my questions--I'm still waiting.
- VII. Please order me 100 copies of a publication entitled "Highway Bypasses-Wisconsin Communities Share Their Experiences" or a similar title.
- VIII. How does the Inner interconnect with the proposed Hwy 29 Bypass, East side Chippewa Falls Crossing, CTH F & T, and the new Hwy ~~194~~ lane?
29-4-
- IX. Is the inner actually a masqueraded tax increase for the City of Eau Claire residents? Hastings Way maintenance and improvements would more than likely be City of Eau Claire responsibility with the inner bypass. There is almost no chance that the City of Eau Claire would take that responsibility from DOT with an outer, this was verified at the 4/12/94 meeting in Madison.

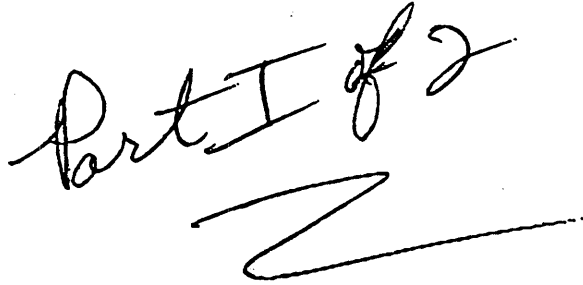
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- X. David W. Carlson reportedly made a comment to fellow Democrats, something to this effect, "I could beat Rodney Moen in a primary senate election by using the Hwy 53 Bypass issue alone." This has added a threatening political tone into the bypass issue.
- XI. Please help me get a written response to my 4/11/94 letter to Secretary Charles Thompson.

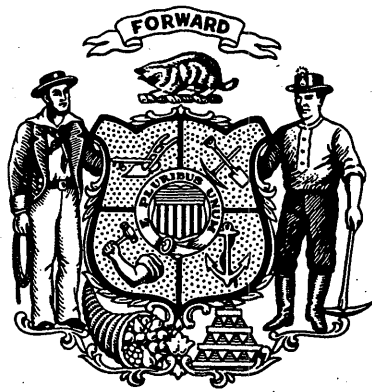
Sincerely,


Dave Zien
State Senator
23rd Senate District

DAZ:cad



END



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MEDIA RELEASE

APR 26 1994

**TO: Citizens of the Chippewa Valley
And
All Area Media**

**FROM: Former Legislators and Former Transportation Projects
Commission Members**

RE: U.S. Highway 53 Project

DATE: April 12, 1994

*Roswell
Van Gordon*

As more information is published in regard to the U.S. 53 bypass, the attempt to mislead the public becomes more prevalent. Before this project surfaced, the Department of Transportation (DOT) always required a consensus or approval by a majority of the area affected. The Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) also reflected this concern during the commission's public hearing process.

Since the inception of the TPC, the DOT has never come out prior to that agency's presentation before the TPC with a prearranged selection of an "only route". Why the change in policy? Could it be that previous commitments may have been made? Remember, the process has always been a democratic one! Any member of the TPC can make amendments or motions to approve, modify or disapprove DOT's recommendations. To take this one step further, any member of the legislature or Joint Committee on finance can offer amendments.

-2-

The editorial in the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram on February 27, 1994, entitled, "Brochures Alone Won't Fix U.S. 53", indicating that the inner bypass (now called a "freeway" by the DOT) is the only alternative the state will pay for. The suggestion that it's no longer a question of where it would be built only "if", is incorrect and totally misleading. The DOT is not the final step in the process, even though some of the local DOT personnel may want to impress everyone as having that much jurisdiction and authority.

There are many problems with Hastings Way and they will remain until it is properly updated. The numerous uncontrolled intersections, entrances and exits from businesses create a tremendous problem. The inner bypass will not do more than an outer bypass to relieve this situation.

The word bypass is defined as a road or highway that passes around or to one side of an obstructed or congested area. Other cities have an interstate system that bypass at a measurable distance. Examples: Racine-8 miles and Kenosha-6 miles, why not Eau Claire? The best return for the taxpayers dollar invested is the outer bypass which is the only route that can be designated to travel at 65mph.

The continued charade of DOT's misinformation that results in misleading the public--must stop! The DOT must respond and answer questions placed before them by legislators, rather than ignoring them.

An overwhelming number of resolutions have been passed in support of the outer bypass, with very few in support of the inner bypass. The vast majority of our constituents' phone calls, letters, and petitions were in support of the outer bypass. Even the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram's referendum-survey showed the outer bypass with the greatest support.

-3-

(To date, twenty governmental bodies have either passed resolutions supporting the outer bypass or rejecting the inner bypass and only four governmental bodies support the inner bypass; including Superior who recently passed a resolution supporting a inner bypass freeway).

With the overwhelming support by the elected officials and the public reflecting a true majority and consensus, we should be directing our efforts toward the construction of the outer bypass. This would make more funds available to update Hastings Way and modify the south end connection to the I-94 system.

DOT estimates are as follows:

Inner Bypass

Outer Bypass

\$79 Million (Total Cost)

\$68 Million (Total Cost)

\$15 Million (Hastings Way Imp.)

\$23 Million (Hastings Way Imp.)

\$64 Million (Inner Bypass)

\$45 Million (Outer Bypass)

(Source: Draft environmental impact statement,
page 8-9.)

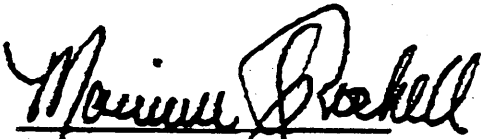
The \$11 million dollar savings that would be provided by constructing the outer bypass could be used for additional improvements of existing Highway 53.

Examples might include:

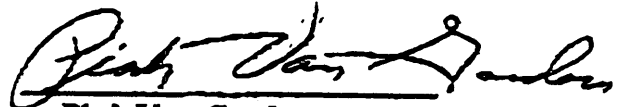
1. Melby Road overpass.
2. Interchange that would direct traffic to the malls.
3. County Trunk Highway 00 overpass. (Farm & Fleet)
4. Eddy Lane intersection improvements. (A possible overpass)

-4-

Let's accomplish the most for the dollars invested and give the people of this state and others who use our highways, be they tourists, truckers, etc., the ability to bypass the urban area. And, let's place the dollars saved to a more beneficial use, that of correcting the problems on Hastings Way. This would allow existing U.S. Hwy. 53 to be designated as Business Hwy. 53 and thereby qualifying for state and/or federal funding.

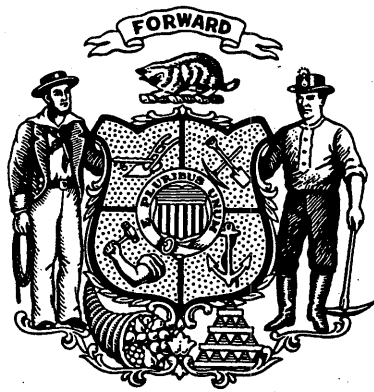


Marvin Roshell
Former State Senator,
TPC Member And
Transportation Committee
Member



Pink Van Gorden
Former Representative,
TPC Member And Highway
Committee Member

END



END

Group pushes inner bypass

4-13-94

Members want action on project

By Thomas B. Pfankuch
Leader-Telegram staff

Another new group has formed to push for construction of the U.S. 53 inner corridor, the second such group to form recently.

The Build 53 Now group will conduct a public information campaign to encourage support for the project from residents and public officials in the Chippewa Valley, said group chairman Bob Halloin, president of the Landmark Co. in Eau Claire.

"We are emphasizing the need to move forward now," Halloin said in a prepared statement.

Another political action group formed in March to lobby for construction of the U.S. 53 inner corridor west of Lake Altoona. That group formed in part to counter efforts of a group that has for years supported construction of a U.S. 53 outer corridor bypass east of Lake Altoona.

Halloin said the inner corridor is the only suitable route to make a freeway connection to the north of Eau Claire and to remove traffic from congested Hastings Way.

He also said the new highway would spur economic development.

"We'll be sharing information about the importance of the new highway through advertisements, speaking appearances and cooperation with other organizations interested in the project," he said.

Eau Claire Public Works Director Bill Bittner, a member of the new group's steering committee, said the group will try to represent the silent majority that supports the inner route.

Bittner said he checked with City Attorney Ted Fischer before joining the group and found that it is legal for him to be an active member.

"The U.S. 53 issue is absolutely critical to the future of Eau Claire and to the safety of its residents," Bittner said. "The group wants to get the highway funded and get it built."

Bittner said the group is not a political action committee. Rather, he called it "an advocacy group."

"Most people just expect the Department of Transportation and the government to do what is right — they don't expect they have to go and demand it," Bittner said.

But in this case, facing so much local opposition to the project, people must become active in supporting the inner corridor, he said.

"It (the outer corridor) just is not a viable option," he said.

Other steering committee members include Eau Claire residents Mike O'Meara, Joel Higgins and Pat Culbert; John Dotseth of Menomonie; and Mike Kell of Chippewa Falls.

Voice of the People

Needed now

For the past three years since WAYY became Newstalk, we have spent a great deal of time studying the Highway 53 project proposed to solve one of our most pressing problems — the overburdened flow of traffic through the city of Eau Claire on US 53.

Why do we need a corridor?

To let tourist and truck traffic through our area on the way to tourist resort areas like Chetek, Rice Lake, Hayward, etc., without taking forever to pass our metro area. And for heavy trucks heading for Duluth or Wausau or Green Bay, to speed commerce on its way.

To allow a route where business vehicles can exit into Eau Claire and Altoona for deliveries and then return to the freeway that will intersect with the North Crossing and the new four lane Highway 29.

But the most important is to return Hastings Way to a less-stressful flow of traffic. The DOT has worked long and hard to take 21,000 vehicles per day off Hastings Way.

They have planned for the future and their plan has been endorsed by Gov. Thompson. The inner corridor route is that solution. It is the route that Newstalk WAYY endorses.

The public, while not coming up with a Utopian consensus, has made it clear that no one wants another 5, 10 or 15 years of bickering and gnashing of the teeth. Twenty years from now an outer corridor may well be a reality. But with the year 2002 as the earliest date of construction, the inner must move forward now.

Hastings Way will be improved and returned as a viable city street. Growth for Eau Claire and Altoona

will proceed in an orderly way without urban sprawl.

We must let the DOT do its job and construct the inner bypass or waste the moment and allow Madison, Green Bay and Milwaukee to have their projects approved while we continue our no-win fight.

MARTY GREEN

WAYY station manager, Eau Claire

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

7-7-94

Quit arguing, let's build the highway

To the editor:

In the debate over the building of a new Hwy. 53 south from near Chippewa Falls to the south edge of Eau Claire, I have concluded there are several basic differences between those favoring the inner vs. the outer route.

Those preferring the inner route want a new highway between Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire that will also serve as a bypass of Hastings Way. Those who want the outer bypass want a bypass of the city of Eau Claire only as far from that city as possible.

Those favoring the inner route want primarily to help local drivers, while those favoring the outer bypass prefer to help the truckers, vacationers and out-of-towners. Those who like the inner route want a highway built as soon as possible. The outer bypass proponents don't care when it gets built, as long as it is never the inner route, and bypasses Eau Claire completely.

The people who favor the inner route no doubt drive frequently between Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire. The outer bypass people evidently seldom have a reason to travel to Eau Claire, the largest city in this area. Those who favor the inner route just want a safer highway to travel on soon, while those for the outer bypass just want their own way, and don't want the bypass to help the city or

people of Eau Claire in any way.

I have lived almost my entire life in Chippewa Falls and there are a lot of things I don't like about Eau Claire. But denying the people of both Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls a safer and faster highway between the two cities, just to get even with Eau Claire, is not sound judgment. Thousands of people in both cities have to drive between the two cities every day. They don't want or need to bypass Eau Claire. They just need to get there safely.

Everyone who reads the Voice of the People knows how I stand on this issue. I may disagree with those with the opposite viewpoint, but I respect their opinions. I would never dream of calling up any of the vocal backers of the outer bypass and try to change their mind. So I would really appreciate if those same people would quit calling me at home and work to try and change my mind. It won't work.

Common sense and the Department of Transportation says the inner route is the best for the most people. Let's quit arguing and just get a new highway built in this century. Thank you.

DAN VARGA

Chippewa Falls

4-15-94

Voice of the People

Statement false

On March 29, during a WAYY radio interview with Altoona Mayor Larry Sturz regarding the U.S. 53 reroute issue, a caller identified as "Wilmer," a leader of the opposition to the inner bypass, said: "Last month, the Public Intervenor in Madison indicated the outer corridor was the better of the alternatives from an environmental perspective. Has the DOT or anyone notified Altoona about that yet?"

Mayor Sturz replied: "You must be kidding. DOT would not notify Altoona on anything that was pro-outer bypass."

The caller's statement regarding the Public Intervenor's position is false and the accusation against DOT in this regard is unwarranted.

The Public Intervenor Office was created by the Legislature in 1967 and charged with protecting public rights in the waters and other natural resources of the state as those rights are defined by law. It carries out its charge by advocating for better environmental laws and by watch-dogging government agencies to make sure their decisions comply with existing environmental laws.

It is empowered to sue government agencies if they fail to protect public rights in natural resources. The Public Intervenor Office is staffed by two assistant attorneys general in the Department of Justice. It is guided by a nine-member Citizens Advisory Committee appointed by the attorney general, which establishes priorities, provides consultation for taking positions on environmental issues and selects the cases for Public Intervenor involvement.

As a longstanding member of the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Public Intervenor, I can assert that the Public Intervenor Office has never and does not now take the position that the outer corridor is the best alternative from an environmental point of view.

RONALD J. KOSHOSHEK

Bloomer

4-15-94

Opinions

Leader-Telegram

Charles Graaskamp Eugene Ringhand Don Huebscher
Publisher Editor Managing Editor

'Outer' drumbeats badly out of tune

So when will it end? Just when it looked like some progress was being made in pushing the inner corridor as the proper route for the U.S. 53 bypass, two former legislators have reared their heads to keep the obstructionist drumbeats going.

Two groups now are working to get the public involved in supporting the inner bypass for U.S. 53. That bypass would run west of

Editorial:

Lake Altoona and is the route the experts at the Department of Transportation have concluded would be best for the Chippewa Valley and the rest of Wisconsin.

But those groups keep running into the stubborn opposition forces, based in Altoona, that are pushing for an outer bypass east of Lake Altoona.

This opposition group initially got the support of area legislators, but that support apparently is waning. Evidence of this is the attempt to have the legislators sign a second letter supporting the outer bypass, which ultimately was circulated with the names of only two former legislators.

Former Sen. Marvin Roshell, a Democrat from Chippewa Falls, and former Rep. Heron "Pink" Van Gorden, a Republican from Neillsville, allege that the DOT is spewing misinformation about the project.

The only real misinformation, however, is coming from the likes of Roshell, Van Gorden and those behind them. What they fail to tell the public is that the DOT is firmly committed to the inner bypass and what the opponents really want is for nothing to be built.

The reality is this: Either the entire Chippewa Valley gets behind the inner bypass and presses for legislative approval of the badly needed project, or the area will be saddled with the dangerous and deadly Hastings Way.

It's time to put the debate, the acrimony, the futility of grabbing at straws behind us. It's time to believe the officials at the DOT when they say: It's the inner bypass or nothing.

The Transportation Projects Commission in a matter of months will take up the bypass issue. Because of various factors, the prospects seem good that the inner bypass would receive state approval and funding in the next biennium if the Chippewa Valley gets its act together.

Major transportation projects now require environmental impact statements, and the inner bypass proposal is one of only three that reportedly will have such a document completed for TPC review.

But it's unlikely that the noisy minority who keep the drumbeats going against the inner bypass will come to their senses and join the bandwagon. Some people simply can't grasp reality if it runs counter to their long-held positions, even if presented with irrefutable facts. Such seems to be the case with the inner bypass opponents.

Be sure to thank them the next time you drive on Hastings Way for the pleasurable experience you had – if you live to tell them about it.

Opinions

5-6-94

Leader-Telegram

Charles Graaskamp Eugene Ringhand Don Huebscher
Publisher Editor Managing Editor

Inner bypass gains support

Courage has been in short supply among the Chippewa Valley's legislative delegation concerning the U.S. 53 bypass issue.

Instead of facing the issue head-on and deciding to press for what is best for the valley, the delegation generally has run for cover, trying to find a comfortable position that straddles both sides.

But then came the surprising announcement Wednesday that Rep. Michael Wilder, a Chippewa Falls Democrat, has re-thought his position and will push for construction of the inner bypass route west of Lake Altoona.

Editorial:

Hooray!

Maybe Wilder's courage in backing the only sensible solution to the mess along the U.S. 53 corridor will shake up the rest of the legislators with an interest in this issue. But the track records of state Sens. David Zien, R-Eau Claire, and Rod Moen, D-Whitehall, and state Rep. Rob Kreibich, R-Eau Claire, leave us with little optimism.

Wilder now joins state Rep. Dave Plombon, D-Stanley, in supporting the inner bypass, which the state Department of Transportation has picked as the only route that a U.S. 53 freeway could take.

That correct, logical position is being fought vociferously by a small group in Altoona that continues to push for an outer bypass route east of Lake Altoona. The DOT, after thoroughly examining this alternative, has said it would not relieve enough of the traffic congestion on Hastings Way and would damage the environment much more than the inner bypass route.

This is crunch time for the bypass issue, and Wilder's announcement likely will enhance the prospects of the state Transportation Projects Commission recommending funding for the project.

The push for the inner bypass was set back, however, by the unfortunate and unenlightened vote of the Seymour Town Board, which switched positions Tuesday night and supported the outer bypass.

Studies by town residents concluded that the inner bypass would be best for the town, but the two board members who voted for the outer route – Gary McFarlane and Cindy Davis – ignored this advice.

These two board members caved in to the emotional arguments of the inner bypass foes who simply don't want any U.S. 53 improvement to be built in the Chippewa Valley. That is the only logical way of viewing this vote because the facts overwhelmingly are on the side of the DOT's support for the inner bypass, and the chances of the outer bypass being built over the objections of the DOT are nil.

But if legislators like Wilder can come around to see this issue in its proper perspective, maybe there is hope for the Seymour Town Board. But time is growing short – hearings on the project will be held this summer – and officials and residents alike must decide if they want a freeway built or not.

And they have to realize that the only one that will be built will run west of Lake Altoona.

Charles Graaskamp
Publisher

Eugene Ringhand
Editor

Don Huebscher
Managing Editor

'Outer' drumbeats badly out of tune

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16th

APRIL 1994

SATURDAY

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CHIPPEWA HERALD TELEGRAM

Brian R. Harrison
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Editor



LuAnn Oldenberg
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Ray Horvatin
Pressroom Foreman

With questions on the Opinion Page, call 723-5515

Bible verse for today

If anyone serves me, let him follow me. — John 12:26

Do the homework, then decide route

Despite efforts to make it look like everyone is on the same page, it's time for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to back off its insistence that the Hwy. 53 bypass be routed along the so-called inner corridor.

The DOT and the city of Eau Claire, which favor the inner route, have thrown a full court press in recent days to win public support of the inner bypass route. They've formed committees backing the inner route; they've gone on radio, TV and in the newspapers to tout the benefits of the inner route; and they've fanned out to make a pitch to various municipal bodies, asking them

Editorial

to back off of opposition to the inner bypass.

Communities such as Altoona, Chippewa Falls, Chippewa County and even Rice Lake, however, are not convinced that the inner bypass is the route to go. They believe the outer bypass will better serve their communities, and have gone on the record as saying so.

Inner bypass proponents apparently think a high profile public relations campaign will force communities to accept the inner route. Proponents wring their hands, saying if opponents don't get on board soon, the state will bypass the Hwy. 53 project and spend the money elsewhere. Milwaukee, they wail, will get state money for road projects that should be spent in the Chippewa Valley.

That's the way it should be. That's the way the system is designed to work.

The money should be spent elsewhere, because the Hwy. 53 bypass project is not ready.

To be ready, the first order of business is reaching a consensus as to the best location for the bypass. That doesn't mean unanimity — it means there must be a majority agreement that one location is more favorable than the other.

That consensus does not exist yet on the Hwy. 53 bypass route.

A considerable number of communities, legislators and public officials favor the outer bypass.

It would be a sham to force Altoona, Chippewa Falls, Chippewa County and other communities into accepting a bypass route that they do not want. Threatening them — "Back the inner bypass or we'll lose out on state funding" — is a hollow argument, and should be ignored.

The real questions are:

■ Who is responsible for making the DOT do its homework? Why has it completed an environmental impact statement on the inner bypass, but not the outer?

It matters more that the work is done right — that all options are on the table — than in hurrying a decision simply because some people want it done their way. A consensus is built when sides can see the common good of a project, not when one side bullies others to accept its view.

■ Why is the DOT stepping out of its role as researcher/designer, and into that of an advocate?

The DOT is stepping into the political arena by trying to tell communities where the bypass must go. That's beyond its scope. It's job is to study, design and construct a highway that will serve all communities. It cannot decide what is best for Altoona, Chippewa Falls or other communities.

It can instruct and advise, but ultimately, it must let elected councils and boards make the political decisions.

The USH 53 Outer Bypass and Hastings Way Improvement *Action Committee*

MEDIA RELEASE

April 21, 1994

COMMITTEE ENDORSES ROSHELL-VAN GORDEN USH 53 PROJECT STATEMENT

We applaud and endorse the Media Release issued by Marvin Roshell and Pink Van Gorden on April 12. As experienced and reputable former members of the Legislature and the Transportation Projects Commission, they stated honestly and forthrightly the concerns of motorists and taxpayers.

Area citizens are outraged by the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram's childish editorial criticism of the Roshell-Van Gorden statement. Does such ranting by the Leader-Telegram serve its readers? We think not!

Had the Leader-Telegram practiced responsible journalism, they would have given thoughtful consideration to the following points made by Roshell and Van Gorden.

1. Their clarification of WisDOT's statement that a "freeway" (Inner Bypass) is not the only alternative that the state will pay for. The DOT's recommendation is only the initial step in the selection process.
2. The uncontrolled intersections, entrances, and exits from businesses along Hastings Way must be properly updated. The Inner Bypass will not do more than an Outer Bypass to relieve the current condition.

Co-Chairmen:

Carlyn L. Malom 682 Meadow View Dr., Chippewa Falls WI 54729 • 723-6638

Robert D. Sather 2120 Moonlight Bay Dr., Altoona WI 54720 • 835-5020 (home) 836-3373 (work)

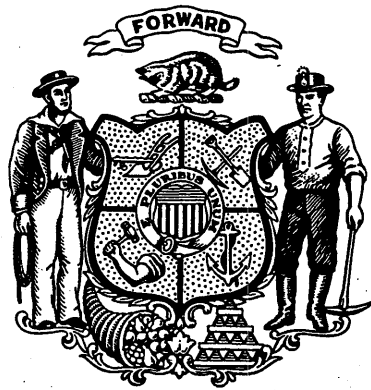
3. The best return for the taxpayers' dollar invested is from the Outer Bypass, which is the only bypass route that can be designated for 65 mph.
4. The vast majority of constituents' phone calls, letters, and petitions were in support of the Outer Bypass, just as the responders to the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram's referendum-surveys gave the greatest support to the Outer Bypass.
5. The continued charade of DOT's misinformation that results in misleading the public must stop. This, along with the DOT's withdrawal of the project in 1992, has delayed and obstructed the project for too long.
6. With the longstanding support by elected officials and the public reflecting a true consensus, we should be directing our efforts toward the construction of the Outer Bypass. This would make more funds available to properly update Hastings Way and modify the southern connection to I-94. The \$11 million dollar savings from this action could be used for additional improvements to the section of Hastings Way from Eddy Lane northward.

Summary

Yesterday, April 20, the DOT released its Final Environmental Impact Statement, recommending the Inner Bypass (Freeway). The DOT's relentless pursuit of a selection already made in 1988 has resulted in a costly EIS to justify that route.

However, the Roshell-Van Gorden solution provides local drivers, as well as truckers and tourists, with the greatest return from taxpayer dollars. The DOT's completion timeline for the project permits its successful implementation.

END



END

WAYY Radio Editorial — April 22, 1994

FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS SINCE WAYY BECAME NEWSTALK WE HAVE SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME STUDYING THE HIGHWAY 53 PROJECT THAT HAS BEEN PROPOSED TO SOLVE ONE OF OUR AREAS MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS. THE OVERBURDENED FLOW OF TRAFFIC THROUGH THE CITY OF EAU CLAIRE ON US 53.

WHY DO WE NEED A CORRIDOR?

TO LET TOURIST AND TRUCK TRAFFIC PROCEED THROUGH OUR AREA ON THEIR WAY TO TOURIST RESORT AREAS LIKE CHETEK..RICE LAKE HAYWARD ETC WITHOUT TAKING FOREVER TO PASS OUR METRO AREA. FOR HEAVY TRUCK'S HEADING FOR DULUTH...OR WAUSAU OR GREEN BAY TO SPEED COMMERCE ON ITS WAY.

TO ALLOW A ROUTE WHERE BUSINESS VEHICLES THE ABILITY TO EXIT INTO EAU CLAIRE...AND ALTOONA FOR DELIVERIES AND THEN RETURN TO A FREEWAY THAT WILL INTERSECT WITH THE NORTH CROSSING AND THE NEW 4 LANE HIGHWAY 29.

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT IS TO RETURN HASTINGS WAY TO A LESS STRESSFUL FLOW OF TRAFFIC. THE DOT HAS WORKED LONG AND HARD AND WHILE NO ORGANIZATION IS PERFECT IN ITS EXECUTION I BELIEVE THEY HAVE FOUND A WAY TO TAKE 21,000 VEHICLES PER DAY OFF OF HASTINGS WAY. THEY HAVE PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE AND THEIR PLAN HAS BEEN ENDORSED BY GOVERNOR THOMPSON IN MEETINGS THAT I HAVE ATTENDED. THEY HAVE PROPOSED A ROUTE THAT WILL BENEFIT THAT PROBLEM.....THE INNER CORRIDOR ROUTE IS THAT SOLUTION. IT IS THE ROUTE THAT NEWSTALK WAYY ENDORSES

THE PUBLIC WHILE NOT COMING UP WITH A UTOPIAN CONSENSUS HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT NO ONE WANTS ANOTHER 5..10 OR 15 YEARS OF BICKERING AND NASHING OF TEETH.


WE MUST MOVE NOW TO UNITE BEHIND THE INNER CORRIDOR. THE ROUTE THAT MAKES SENSE FOR OUR FUTURE. 20 YEARS FROM NOW A OUTER CORRIDOR MAY WELL BE A REALITY. BUT WITH THE 2002 AS THE DATE OF EARLIEST CONSTRUCTION 8 YEARS AWAY. THE INNER MUST MOVE FORWARD NOW.

HASTINGS WAY WILL BE IMPROVED AND RETURNED AS A VIABLE CITY STREET. GROWTH FOR EAU CLAIRE AND ALTOONA WILL PROCEED IN AN ORDERLY WAY WITHOUT URBAN SPROLL.

WE MUST CAPTURE THE MOMENT AND LET THE DOT DO ITS JOB AND CONSTRUCT THE INNER BY PASS.
OR WASTE THE MOMENT AND ALLOWMADISON...GREEN BAY. MILWAUKEE TO HAVE THEIR PROJECT'S CITED AND APPROVED WHILE WE CONTINUE OUR NO WIN FIGHT.

I PRAY WE CAN GO FORWARD.....AND IN THE END EVERYONE WILL PROSPER.

MARTY GREEN WAYY STATION MANAGER



Opinions

Leader-Telegram

Charles Graaskamp
Publisher

Eugene Ringhand
Editor

Don Huebscher
Managing Editor

4/22/94

53 bypass study over; get behind it

After everything that has been written about the U.S. 53 bypass issue, it's hard to come up with yet another argument about why it's time to settle the controversy and get on with building the freeway.

However, the historic release Wednesday of the final environmental impact statement on the suitability of the inner corridor as the best alternative for a U.S. 53 bypass should cement the proposal in the minds of every resident and official of the Chippewa Valley.

Editorial:

Some \$1.2 million has been spent studying where the bypass should be built.

For more reasons than there is time and space to detail, the best place for that bypass is a route that runs west of Lake Altoona.

In the most exhaustive environmental impact statement ever conducted by the state Department of Transportation, the \$79 million inner bypass was given the green light by a host of agencies, both state and federal. DOT officials emphasize that it is highly unlikely that the outer bypass route, stubbornly pursued by a group led by Altoona officials, would pass such muster.

That's not to say that the outer bypass wasn't reviewed. In a draft environmental impact statement, which preceded the choice of the inner bypass as the preferred alternative, the outer bypass was evaluated as thoroughly as the inner bypass or the other alternative, upgrading the current route.

DOT officials emphasize, and they are right, that the inner corridor has survived as the best alternative for the bypass after undergoing this thorough evaluation process.

They also emphasize, and again they are right, that there is no practical way to turn back now – that if the valley doesn't pull together for the inner bypass, no road will be built.

The outer corridor isn't an option any more – environmentally and practically it makes absolutely no sense – and the time for political games is over.

Perhaps the most disheartening part of this unfortunate controversy has been the weak-kneed reaction of our elected state officials.

Instead of jumping at the chance to get a major highway built for the Chippewa Valley – something that would save lives and produce jobs – the lot of them are ducking their responsibility and running for cover.

It's up to state Sen. Dave Zien, R-Eau Claire, as a member of the Transportation Projects Commission, to take the lead on this issue and help get the road built. He needs assistance from state Sen. Rod Moen, D-Whitehall, who needs to find some backbone on this issue as well.

State Rep. Rob Kreibich, R-Eau Claire, also has to stand up for what obviously is right and tell his constituents in Altoona that they fought the good fight but lost, and now it's time to get on with the inevitable.

The Chippewa Valley will be watching to see if these officials do what they were elected to do.



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Tommy G. Thompson
Governor

Charles H. Thompson
Secretary

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
P. O. Box 7910
Madison, WI 53707-7910

April 29, 1994

The Honorable David Zien
Wisconsin State Senator
P.O. Box 7882
Room 139 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Zien:

Let me first thank you, along with Senator Moen and Representative Zukowski, for meeting last week with me and others from the Department of Transportation to discuss the Highway 53 project at Eau Claire. While we were able to cover a number of issues at the meeting, you have raised other issues in your April 11 letter to me and in an April 15 letter to Tom McCarthy. Therefore, I feel it appropriate to summarize in writing the key points we made in the meeting, and to respond to some additional questions you raise in your letters.

Tom McCarthy is also responding to several of your questions, and in some cases we may be covering the same ground. But I want to be sure the issues you raise are answered as thoroughly as possible.

I have organized my response as a series of questions -- sometimes paraphrased for clarity -- and answers.

1. Why does the Department of Transportation, along with other state and federal agencies, favor the Inner Corridor over the Outer?

I have included as Attachment 1 a one-page briefing paper and a one-page Summary of Impacts from the EIS document, both of which were given to you and the other legislators at last week's meeting. Taken together, I believe these documents provide as concise an answer as is possible to this question. I will merely summarize by saying that on balance, given the entire array of impacts considered, both positive and negative, the Inner Corridor has been judged by this Department and other agencies as being preferable to the Outer.

2. Will the Department be basing its recommendations to the TPC only on the Inner Corridor?

For reasons summarized in the Attachments, the Outer Corridor was ruled out and the Inner Corridor selected from the competing alternative corridors

following the environmental process set forth in the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For the Department now to recommend other than the Inner Corridor would be to abrogate the environmental process. In the Department's detailed and objective comparison of candidate major projects this summer, we will base our recommendations to the Transportation Projects Commission on the Inner Corridor.

3. What can the Transportation Projects Commission and the Legislature do with the Department's recommendations? Will the Transportation Projects Commission have an opportunity to vote on the Outer Corridor this summer?

Assuming the Highway 53 Inner Corridor competes successfully in the Department's ranking process, we will be recommending it to the Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) this summer for major project funding. The Commission can approve this recommendation or it can disapprove it, as of course can the full Legislature. The Commission or the Legislature could also direct the Department to return to the EIS process and attempt to justify construction of the Outer Corridor. But the Department's position is that such a directive would not be wise since it would mean a delay of several years, at a minimum, and an additional study cost of several hundred thousand dollars, again at a minimum. I would also point out such a directive would protract rather than end public controversy; indeed, it would likely intensify controversy. More importantly, however, the outcome of such a reassessment would be far from certain. In the absence of significant new information, the process would almost inevitably bring us back once again to the Inner Corridor, for precisely the reasons this Department and other agencies have selected that alternative now. Were the legislature to prohibit construction of the Inner Corridor, it may be that none of the remaining alternatives would achieve approval from federal and state environmental agencies, resulting in selection of a no-build alternative. Alternatively, selection of the existing corridor along Hastings Way might turn out to be the most effective remaining alternative. In any case, it must be clearly understood that the environmental process cannot pre-select a desired alternative. The recommended alternative must flow from the analysis.

4. You ask in your April 15 letter to Tom McCarthy for proof that the Inner Corridor "was not chosen decades ago," and further ask when the DOT started "to support the Inner."

As we discussed at the meeting last week, the Outer Corridor competed for TPC approval in 1984 and in 1986 and was unsuccessful both times. I have attached project sheets provided to TPC members in 1984 and in 1986 that show the Outer Corridor as a candidate project being considered. In both cases the Outer Corridor was unsuccessful because, attracting only a relatively small amount of traffic, the project did not compete well with the other candidate projects at the time. Indeed, even today, the user benefits available from the Outer Corridor are only about 60 cents per dollar of investment, compared to a \$1.48 returned for each dollar of investment on the Inner Corridor. I would also point out that in 1984 and in 1986 there was little local interest expressed at the TPC hearings for funding of the Outer Corridor. Thus, in 1987 the District and the Department began looking for other corridor alternatives that would yield greater overall user benefits. It was at that time that the Department began to consider and study the Inner Corridor. As the attached 1988, 1990, and 1992 project sheets show, the Inner Corridor was presented to the TPC in each of these sessions, precisely because the Outer Corridor had not fared well in state-wide competition, and because the Outer Corridor had attracted little local support. Of course, as you know, because the project was undergoing EIS evaluation and because of local controversy, the Inner Corridor did not in any of these sessions gain recommendation from either the DOT or TPC.

5. You ask in your letter for the latest traffic counts on Highway 53 north of the North Crossing. Your question, I presume, is a result of Fred Ross' comments at our meeting last week.

I quote directly from the final Environmental Impact Statement. . . .
"An early traffic count in the vicinity of the North Crossing Interchange with US Highway 53 indicates that 12,000 vehicles per day (VPD) are using the North Crossing with a resulting increase in traffic on US Highway 53 to 49,790 VPD north of the North Crossing. Existing traffic volumes in this area in 1990 were 36,000 VPD. As indicated by these recent traffic counts, the new facility [that is, the North Crossing] will not reduce future traffic volumes

on US Highway 53 but, due to improved accessibility, will actually result in a minor traffic increase on US Highway 53. The year 2010 traffic is projected to increase north of Birch Street from 58,000 to 61,000 vehicles per day with the North Crossing in operation."

6. You ask that the Department prepare a "\$24 Million proposal" for a major project on Hastings Way for the TPC this summer.

First, I want to emphasize that isolated improvements to Hastings Way, even \$24 Million worth, will not solve either the problem of congestion for 60,000 vehicles on this facility or the need for a Highway 53 freeway connection to the north. In addition, isolated improvements on existing Highway 53 would not meet the definition of a major project. If the TPC recommended against funding of the US Highway 53 project, funding for work on Hastings Way would have to come from the District's 3R budget (3R stands for resurfacing, reconstruction, and reconditioning). The District's current funding level for this program is \$15 Million a year. These funds are already programmed for the next six years and already include several safety improvements on Hastings Way.

7. Would the Department seek to return ownership of existing Hastings Way to local governments if the Outer Corridor were constructed?

The Department's long-standing policy is that when a new highway corridor is constructed, ownership and responsibility for maintaining the original corridor is to be assumed by local units of government. If the Inner Corridor is built, WisDOT will initiate negotiations on the transfer of existing Hastings Way/US 53 to local jurisdiction. I want to emphasize, however, that this policy is a general policy; it applies not just to the Inner Corridor, but also to the Outer Corridor and to other alternatives which were considered for US 53 in the Environmental Analysis.

8. You indicated at the meeting and you indicate again in your April 15 letter dissatisfaction with certain comments Tom McCarthy allegedly made, including the inference that the Department of Transportation can get other federal and state agencies to do what it wants.

While I certainly have no knowledge of what Tom may or may not have said, I have talked to him and I am aware that he has responded to you on these

April 29, 1994

alleged comments in writing within the last few days. I want to add my emphasis to what Tom says in his letter, however, that it is absolutely not the case that the Department of Transportation dictates to other agencies. Indeed nothing could be further from the truth.

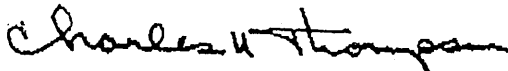
9. In your April 11 letter you ask that we research the possibility of supplementing the Outer Corridor to compete a Melby road overpass, a CTH "OO" overpass, and a road from the east end of Altoona to the Oakwood Mall area.

I have spoken to Tom McCarthy and his staff on this issue and he informs me that these alternates were studied at the request of citizens in the EIS process, and that they were ruled out because they did not materially add to the project objectives of reducing traffic congestion and accidents on existing Highway 53. Our estimates indicate that these supplements to the Outer Corridor would only add about 1800 vehicles per day south of USH 12 and about 400 vehicles per day south of the North Crossing Interchange. On the basis of that research we determined that the cost of these supplements could not be justified by the (limited) traffic benefits they would produce.

Tank Farm

Again, Senator Zien, I appreciated the opportunity of meeting with you and the other legislators and I appreciate this opportunity of responding to many of the questions you have raised in the course of the environmental process. I also realize, especially as a native of Eau Claire, what a difficult and controversial issue this is for the area. But the process we have followed leading up to our decision of the Inner Corridor, has been objective, thorough, and open. To start a study over again to seek to justify the Outer Corridor would seem to me to be not only unproductive but would do little to reduce the controversy. On that basis, I urge you to join with me in supporting the Inner Corridor and moving ahead towards construction of this much needed project.

Sincerely,

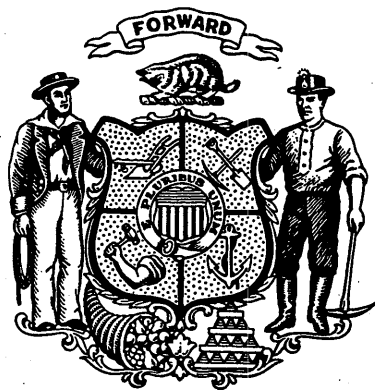


Charles H. Thompson
Secretary

CHT:dab

cc: Sen. Rod Moen
Rep. Robert Zukowski
Tom McCarthy
Fred Ross

END



END

April
1994

Dear TPC Member:

The enclosed maps clearly show why the Inner Bypass will best serve the majority of the population of the Chippawa Valley Corridor.

A consensus for the Inner Bypass has been obscured by the supporters of the Outer Bypass.

Please vote to fund the Inner Bypass and support the D.O.T.

Thank you.

Don Mercier

April 26, 1994

To all our elected officials:

Eau Claire County has a population of over 86,000 people who are depending on the County Board of Supervisors to provide the leadership expected of elected officials. That leadership is especially important in the current bypass impasse. Up to this time several groups have used emotion and sometimes questionable statements to further their cause to the detriment and frustration of the majority of the Eau Claire County population. The time has come to set aside past differences and take a fresh view of the bypass issue.

The bypass issue is not whether the Wisconsin DOT misled the people of the Chippewa Valley in the past. The bypass issue is not a conflict between the cities of Altoona and Eau Claire. It is not even a conflict between the inner or outer bypass. In simple terms the issue is, WHAT IS BEST FOR THE RESIDENTS OF EAU CLAIRE COUNTY, more specifically, the residents of the Chippewa Valley. The responsibility of the DOT is to provide, what they believe, is the best transportation infrastructure to each area. A lengthy, detailed study by the DOT determined the inner bypass will best serve the residents of the entire Chippewa Valley, as well as provide the necessary link to northwest Wisconsin. I trust their decision.

It is now up to the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors to decide if that decision is in the best interests of the majority of Chippewa Valley residents. It is very important the Board look at the facts. Forget past innuendos and special interest positions. Determine what is best for the entire Chippewa Valley, the population that is most directly impacted by the final decision. As you well know, it is important that the decision is made soon.

Enclosed is a four page brochure that provides maps of the inner bypass and the outer bypass and the reasons why the inner bypass will best serve the residents of the Chippewa Valley. In my County Supervisory District I recently spoke to 115 residents (five percent of the District population). I collected 101 signatures (88%) in favor of the inner bypass, three were in favor of the outer bypass, and six had no preference. It is quite apparent the support is there for the inner bypass but no real attempt has ever been made to make that fact known. Highway construction does cause disruption but that is inevitable. Many realize that is the price of progress and accept it for the greater good of the community. Please study this issue carefully, and with the concerns of your constituency in mind, vote your conscience.

The Citizens Action Network for a Decision on 53 Now (CAN DO 53), will be presenting their views in support of the inner bypass at the next meeting of the Public Affairs Council of Eau Claire County. The meeting will be at the Gateway Inn, 1202 Clairemont Ave, 7:00am, Friday May 13, 1994. You are all invited to attend.

If you have any questions I may be reached at 832-7898 day or evenings. Donald A. Mercier, 1204 Bolles Street, Eau Claire WI 54703-2732. Member of the Public Affairs Council of Eau Claire County and the Citizens Action Network for a Decision on 53 (CAN DO 53).

PROPOSED USH 53 BYPASS - LOCATED IN THE CITIES OF ALTOONA AND EAU CLAIRE, THE TOWNS OF HALLIE, SEYMOUR, AND WASHINGTON, AND CHIPPEWA COUNTY. Prepared in April, 1994 by Donald A Mercier

USH 53 is classified as a principal arterial roadway and is designated as a "backbone" highway in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's "Corridors 2020" program. All of these highways are part of an efficient highway network for the entire state of Wisconsin. The completion of the USH 53 corridor in the Chippewa valley, from the IH 94/USH 53 junction south of Eau Claire to the USH 53/STH 124 junction, north of Eau Claire, is a critical link for northwestern Wisconsin, including the Chippewa Valley.

There is an urgent need to upgrade USH 53 (HASTINGS WAY) in the Eau Claire area where traffic exceeds the design capacity of 35,000 vpd. For example, "... on Friday, May 25, 1990, traffic reached 63,000 vpd." (Draft EIS, 1991, P I-8) Those populations along USH 53, north of the Chippewa Valley, such as Barron County, should strongly favor a bypass, any bypass, to improve the flow of traffic through the Eau Claire area on their way to northwestern Wisconsin. The Inner Bypass could be funded in 1994, but only if a consensus is reached by those in the Chippewa Valley. Approved funding in 1994 would speed up the improvement of Hastings Way and building of the Bypass. Bypass funding was lost in 1990 and 1992.

The population centers shown below will be impacted by the Bypass:

<u>CITIES</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>	
Altoona	5,999	6.8 %
Chippewa Falls	12,800	14.6 %
Eau Claire	55,393	63.1 %
<u>TOWNS</u>		
Hallie	4,540	5.2 %
Seymour	2,765	3.2 %
Washington	6,217	7.1 %
Totals	87,714	100.0 %

(Data from the Eau Claire County Official Directory, 1993 and the Chippewa County Official Directory, 1993)

The accompanying map showing the Inner Bypass shows how accessible the Inner Bypass would be to all the populations shown above. It would also be accessible to travelers going through the area.

The cost of the Inner Bypass, if consensus is reached and funding approved this year, would be reduced because the work on improving Hastings Way would be done sooner and at less cost.

The Inner Bypass is favored by the Sierra Club because it is less environmentally destructive, causes less urban sprawl and displaces less farmland. The bridges in the Otter Creek area will span the creek, no bridge supports in the creek. The Otter Creek area and several industrial park areas in Altoona will be more accessible and could result in an improved tax base for Altoona.

The Chippewa Valley leaders, at the state and local levels, owe it to their constituents to support the Inner Bypass - NOW

Why the INNER BYPASS and NOT the OUTER BYPASS:
See the OUTER BYPASS map.

The most apparent conclusion is that the Outer Bypass will be nice for travelers going through the Chippewas Valley on their way north or south but will do very little to serve the local drivers. The Inner Bypass will also serve the through traffic very well. The Inner Bypass/North Crossing combination will save time and miles for local traffic.

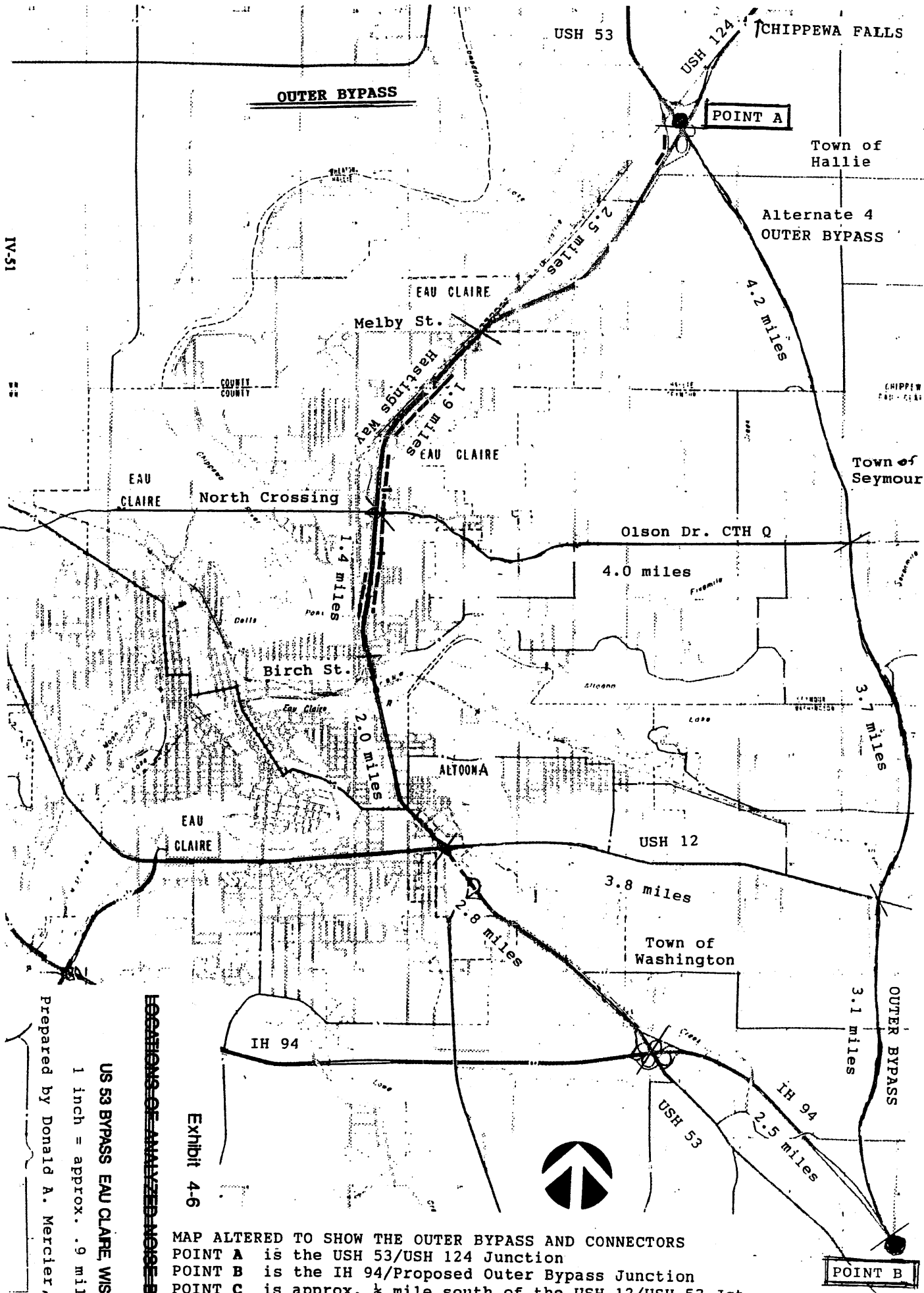
The 65 versus 55 miles per hour argument is not relevant as it takes only two minutes more to drive 12 miles at 55 mph. All urban freeways have the 55 mph limit for safety reasons.

Truckers from Barron County (for example) that are supporting the Outer Bypass, to save \$2.00 per trip, would not realize the savings until the Outer Bypass is built - years later. However, using the Inner Bypass, rather than Hastings Way, they would save \$1.00 per trip much sooner. In addition, the drivers save time and avoid the frustrations of all the stop lights. More relevant, the truckers in the northern part of the city of Eau Claire heading north would not even use the Outer Bypass. Truckers in the southern part of the city of Eau Claire going north would save .50 cents per trip using the Inner Bypass instead of using Hastings Way but would pay an additional \$ 4.40 more to use the Outer Bypass. If they were traveling south they would not use the Outer Bypass but would take USH 53 south to IH 94.

Looking at the maps it is easy to see why the Inner Bypass would remove more local traffic from Hastings Way than the Outer Bypass would. In addition, the Inner Bypass bridge over the Eau Claire River would do much more to allow ambulances and other emergency equipment to go north or south during an emergency if Hastings Way was shut down for any reason. The Outer Bypass route would take much longer. Local drivers in the northwest side of Eau Claire wanting to travel north would find the North Crossing and the Inner Bypass very convenient (no stop lights). Those drivers wanting to travel south would find the North Crossing and the Inner Bypass more convenient than using Clairemont Avenue.

If the Inner Bypass is not funded this year the cost of the Outer Bypass, when built, could exceed the cost of the Inner Bypass. Governor Tommy Thompson said it is up to us in the Chippewa Valley to arrive at a consensus if we want a bypass. We have been told by some that there is a consensus for the Outer Bypass. That is not true. A group of local government, civic and business leaders called Friends of the Inner Corridor and a new group, called Build 53 Now support the Inner Bypass. A newly formed citizens group called Citizens Action Network for a Decision on 53 (CAN DO 53) is actively engaged in getting area leaders to make the necessary commitment to be sure the Inner Bypass is funded in 1994. If your County Board Supervisor is opposed to the Inner Bypass, phone calls and cards or letters are in order. The Transportation Projects Commission will be deciding what projects will get funded. Our legislators also have input on that decision. Please contact them. Action must be taken **NOW**.

IV-51



LOCATIONS OF ANALYZED NOISE BARRIER

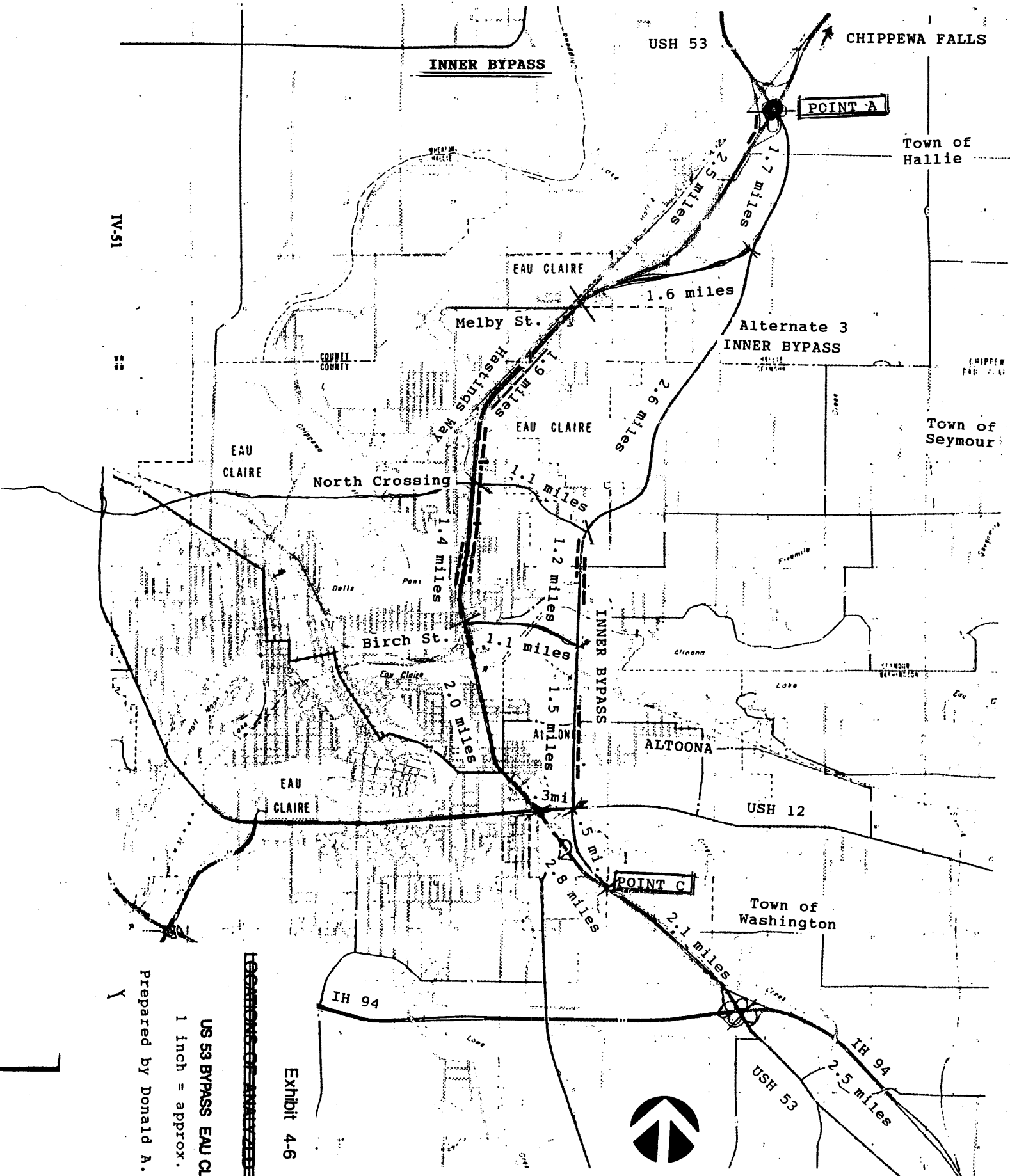
Exhibit 4-6

US 53 BYPASS EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

1 inch = approx. .9 miles

Prepared by Donald A. Mercier, 12/93

MAP ALTERED TO SHOW THE OUTER BYPASS AND CONNECTORS
 POINT A is the USH 53/USH 124 Junction
 POINT B is the IH 94/Proposed Outer Bypass Junction
 POINT C is approx. 1/2 mile south of the USH 12/USH 53 Jct.
 Points A to B on the proposed outer bypass = 11.0 miles.
 Points A to B on Hastings Way, USH 53/IH 94 = 13.1 miles.



IV-51

Y

Prepared by Donald A. Mercier, 12/9

US 53 BYPASS EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN
1 inch = approx. .9 miles

LOCATIONS OF ANALYZED NOISE BARRIERS

Exhibit 4-6

MAP ALTERED TO SHOW THE INNER BYPASS AND CONNECTORS
 POINT A is the USH 53/USH 124 Junction
 POINT B is the IH 94/Proposed Outer Bypass Junction
 POINT C is approx. 1/2 mile south of the USH 12/USH 53 Jct.
 Points A to C is the 7.5 miles of the proposed inner bypass.
 Points A to B on the proposed inner bypass = 12.1 miles.
 Points A to B on Hastings Way, USH 53/IH 94 = 13.1 miles.

7